



Reaching Out to the Community

Mobilizing support within the community is a significant challenge facing many Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs). Developing support and generating name recognition requires tremendous effort, dedication, and creativity. It is important for RCDs to promote themselves and to build goodwill within their community. The first step in building a community based organization is to advertise the program. Successful outreach programs develop interest within the community and motivate local residents to get involved.



Two RCDs, El Dorado County and Tahoe, have used innovative techniques to publicize their programs while simultaneously energizing residents within their communities. Consequently, both have built premier organizations that are responsive to the community. Here are their stories.

Several years ago, El Dorado County RCD developed a unique approach to advertise its program while educating local residents about drought tolerant plants and water-saving landscape methods. They designed and constructed a Xeriscape Demonstration Garden outside the Placerville Main Library. Visitors to the library can pick up a free booklet and enjoy a self-guided tour. The booklet contains a map and information about each plant found in the garden. The project not only educates local residents but also promotes the RCD within the community.

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The California State Seal

In a recent conversation with the office of the California Secretary of State, DOC RCD assistance staff learned that use of the "Great Seal of the State" is very restricted. The seal is intended to be used only for the Governor's official business. Persons, organizations or agencies wishing to use the seal for any purpose must first obtain special permission from the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State is generally very selective about granting permission to use the seal. Use of the seal is governed by Government Code Section 399-405.

Community Outreach *(continued from page 1)*

Residents are encouraged to call for information or to volunteer. According to Chad Miller, District Manager, the Xeriscape Demonstration Garden has generated tremendous interest in the RCD and has led to numerous volunteers supporting the district. Without a doubt, this unique approach has worked exceptionally well for the district.

Tahoe RCD is another district that is actively involved in their community. Jennifer Heath, Program Coordinator for the Backyard Conservation Program, is unrelenting in her efforts to not only promote the organization, but to make a difference in her community.

The RCD works with residents to implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) on their property. BMPs, such as revegetation, retaining walls, and rock-lined infiltration trenches are designed to minimize runoff. The RCD provides a work crew that assists the homeowner in doing the actual on-the-ground work. While the work is being done, the RCD prominently displays a sign that not only advertises the program but also stimulates interest within the neighborhood. Already, more than 50 homes have been retrofitted with BMPs and more than 165 site evaluations have been performed. Over the past year, demand for the RCD's services has skyrocketed. The display board used at the project site has proven to be an effective tool.



Chad Miller, Brian Deason, and Jim Kimmel in the EDRCD Xeriscape garden



Jennifer Heath shows Robert Shun one of Tahoe RCDs runoff minimizing projects

Both RCDs, El Dorado County and Tahoe, are using innovative approaches to reach out to residents within their communities. Although both approaches are different, each is successful. It is important that every RCD develop outreach programs that are creative, useful and energize their communities. There are no limits in ways that RCDs can mobilize community support to build an effective community based program. However, the time for action is now!



Tahoe RCD puts up a display board while implementing BMPs

Written by Robert Shun, RCD Assistance Program Grant Manager

What is the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)?

CEQA, or the California Environmental Quality Act, is a statute that requires state and local agencies to identify the significant environmental impacts of their actions and to avoid or mitigate those impacts, if feasible.

The impetus for CEQA can be traced to the passage of the first federal environmental protection statute in 1969, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). In response to this federal law, the California State Assembly created the Assembly Select Committee on Environmental Quality to study the possibility of supplementing NEPA through state law. This legislative committee, in 1970, issued a report entitled *The Environmental Bill of Rights*, which called for a California counterpart to NEPA. Later that same year, acting on the recommendations of the select committee, the legislature passed, and Governor Reagan signed, the CEQA statute.

CEQA applies to certain activities of state and local public agencies. A public agency must comply with CEQA when it undertakes an activity defined by CEQA as a "project." A project is an activity undertaken by a public agency or a private activity which must receive some discretionary approval (meaning that the agency has the authority to deny the requested permit or approval) from a government agency which may cause either a direct physical change in the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect change in the environment. For example, an RCD stream restoration project may be subject to CEQA requirements.

Most proposals for physical development in California are subject to the provisions of CEQA, as are many governmental decisions which do not immediately result in physical development (such as adoption of a general or community plan). Every development project which requires a discretionary governmental approval will require at least some environmental review pursuant to CEQA, unless an exemption applies.

The required environmental review imposes both procedural and substantive requirements. At a minimum, an initial review of the project and its environmental effects must be conducted. Depending on the potential effects, a further, and more substantial, review may be conducted in the form of an environmental impact report (EIR). A project may not be approved as submitted if feasible alternatives or mitigation measures are able to substantially lessen the significant environmental effects of the project.

Editors note: This article is based on information obtained at the Resources Agency CEQA web page, <http://ceres.ca.gov/ceqa/index.html>



Does your RCD have questions or need help with CEQA or other permit issues? The DOC RCD Assistance Program has recently added Andrew Rush to the team to provide permit assistance to RCDs. Andrew can be reached at 916-323-4163 or by email at arush@consrv.ca.gov

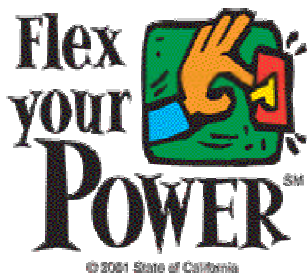
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Energy-saving tips

- ◆ Turn up your thermostat: Set it to 78 degrees or higher when the workplace is occupied, 85 degrees or off after business hours.
- ◆ Reduce your lighting: Turn off lights in unoccupied areas, remove excess lighting.
- ◆ Be energy smart with office equipment.
- ◆ Use shades and blinds.

Find more energy saving tips at: www.flexyourpower.ca.gov

[www.consvr.ca.gov/
dlrp/RCD/index.htm](http://www.consvr.ca.gov/dlrp/RCD/index.htm)

Edited by: Jenny Pickel

The RCD Outlook newsletter is intended to provide RCDs with helpful tips and updates on RCD work statewide. If you would like to be added to the mailing list please feel free to call the RCD program staff at 916-324-0774 or send an email to rcd@consvr.ca.gov.